

St Luke's Guide to Covid-19

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What you need to know about self-isolating and testing

Symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have **at least 1** of these symptoms.

What to do if you or your child have symptoms

If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

1. **Get a test** to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible (within 5 days).
2. **You must all stay at home** and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.
3. **Anyone you live with**, and anyone in your **support bubble**, must also **stay at home** until you get your result.

When to self-isolate and what to do

Self-isolation is when you **do not leave your home** because you have or might have coronavirus (COVID-19). This helps stop the virus spreading to other people.

You must self-isolate immediately if:

- you have any [symptoms of coronavirus](#) (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- you've **tested positive** for coronavirus – this means you have coronavirus
- you **live with someone** who has symptoms or tested positive
- someone **in your support bubble** has symptoms or tested positive
- [you're told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace](#)
- you **arrive in the UK** from a country with a high coronavirus risk – see [GOV.UK: how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#)

How to self-isolate and what to do

You **must not leave your home** if you are self-isolating.

Do not:

- **do not** go to work, school or public places – work from home if you can
- **do not** go on public transport or use taxis
- **do not** go out to get food and medicine – order it online or by phone, or ask someone to bring it to your home
- **do not** have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for people providing essential care
- **do not** go out to exercise – exercise at home or in your garden, if you have one

When to get a test

Get a test as soon as possible if you have any symptoms of coronavirus.

The test needs to be done in the **first 5 days** of having symptoms.

You do not need to get a test if you have no Covid-19 symptoms or if you have different symptoms.

When to tell people you've been in close contact with

You may want to **tell people** you've been in close contact with **in the past 48 hours** that you might have coronavirus.

A close contact is somebody you have been within **1 metre of, even for a very short period of time**, or somebody you have been within a **1 to 2 metre distance of for 15 minutes or more** (eg sat in the same car etc)

Tell them that they do not need to self-isolate unless they're contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service. But they should take extra care to follow [social distancing advice](#), including washing their hands often.

Also tell them that if they get any coronavirus symptoms, they must self-isolate and [get a coronavirus test](#) as soon as possible.

Self-Isolation

How long to self-isolate

If you have **symptoms** or have **tested positive** for coronavirus, you'll usually need to self-isolate for at least **10 days**.

You'll also usually need to self-isolate for **14 days** if:

- someone **you live with** has symptoms or tested positive
- someone in your **support bubble** has symptoms or tested positive
- you've been told to self-isolate by **NHS Test and Trace**

Read more about [how long to self-isolate](#).

You should self-isolate for at least **10 days** if:

- **you have symptoms** of coronavirus and **you tested positive**, had an **unclear** result or **did not** have a test
- **you tested positive** but have not had symptoms

10 days start from when the symptoms started.

If you have **not had symptoms**, the 10 days starts from when you **had the test**. But if you **get symptoms after your test**, self-isolate for a **further 10 days** from when your symptoms start.

Stop self-isolating after 10 days if you feel OK

You can **stop** self-isolating after 10 days if either:

- you do **not** have any symptoms
- you **just** have a cough or changes to your sense of smell or taste – these can last for weeks after the infection has gone

Keep self-isolating if you feel unwell

Keep self-isolating if you have any of these symptoms after 10 days:

- a **high temperature** or feeling hot and shivery
- a **runny nose** or **sneezing**
- feeling or being **sick**

- **diarrhoea**

Only stop self-isolating when these symptoms have gone.

If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until **48 hours after they've stopped**.

If you live with someone who has symptoms or tested positive, self-isolate for 14 days.

Self-isolate for 14 days

You should self-isolate for **14 days if you live with** (or are in a **support bubble** with) someone who:

- has **symptoms** of coronavirus and **tested positive**, had an **unclear** result or **did not** have a test
- **tested positive** but has **not** had symptoms

This is because it can take 14 days for symptoms to appear.

The 14 days starts from:

- when the **first person** in your **home or support bubble** started having symptoms.
- the **day they were tested**, if they have **not** had symptoms – but if they get symptoms **after** they were tested, self-isolate for a **further 14 days** from when their symptoms start.

Stop self-isolating after 14 days if you do not get symptoms

You can stop self-isolating after 14 days if you do not get any symptoms.

Keep self-isolating and get a test if you get symptoms

[Get a test to check if you have coronavirus](#) if you get **symptoms while you're self-isolating**.

If your test is **negative**, you should **keep self-isolating** for the rest of the 14 days.

If your test is **positive**, you should **self-isolate for 10 days from when your symptoms started**. This might mean you're self-isolating for longer than 14 days overall.

NHS Test and Trace

If you've been **told to self-isolate** by **NHS Test and Trace** self-isolate for **14 days**.

If you've been in **close contact** with someone who has coronavirus, you may get a **text, email or call** from the NHS Test and Trace service.

They may tell you to **self-isolate for 14 days**.

Find out [what to do if you're told you've been in contact with a person with coronavirus](#).

Getting your test result

You'll get a **text or email** when your result is ready.

Most people get their test results the day after taking the test. Some results might take longer, but you should get them in 72 hours.

There are 3 types of result you can get:

- negative
- positive
- unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive

If you do not get your result, call the coronavirus testing contact centre on 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland). The contact centre is open from 7am to 11pm.

A negative test result

A negative result means the test did not find coronavirus.

You do **not** need to self-isolate if your test is negative, as long as:

- **everyone** you **live with** who has **symptoms** tests **negative**
- **everyone** in your **support bubble** who has **symptoms** tests **negative**
- you were **not** told to self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace – if you were, see [what to do if you've been told you've been in contact with someone who has coronavirus](#)
- you **feel well** – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you're feeling better.

If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped.

Information:

If you're a health or care worker, check with your employer before going back to work.

A positive test result

A positive result means you had coronavirus when the test was done.

If your test is positive, you must self-isolate immediately.

- If you had a test because you had symptoms, keep self-isolating for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you had a test but have not had symptoms, self-isolate for 10 days from when you had the test.

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days from when you start self-isolating.

Read more about [how long to self-isolate](#).

Information:

In England, you'll get an email, text or call from the NHS Test and Trace service if you test positive after having symptoms.

You'll be asked where you've been recently and who you've been in close contact with.

Find out about [being contacted by NHS Test and Trace after testing positive for coronavirus](#).

Unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive test result

An unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive result means it's **not possible to say** if you had coronavirus **when the test was done**.

[Get another coronavirus test](#) as soon as possible if this happens.

If you had a test because you had **symptoms**, you **must keep self-isolating** and have **another test** within 5 days of your symptoms starting.

If you're **not able to have another test** in time, you **must self-isolate for at least 10 days** from when your symptoms started. **Anyone you live with**, and anyone in your **support bubble**, must **self-isolate for 14 days**. Read more about [how long to self-isolate](#).

If you had a test but have **not had any symptoms**, you do **not** need to self-isolate while you wait to get another test. People you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, do not need to self-isolate.

What is a 'support bubble' during the COVID-19 pandemic?

In England, if you live by yourself or are a single parent with dependent children – in other words, if there is only one adult in your home – you can expand your close support network so that it includes one other household of any size. This is called making a 'support bubble' and means you are able to have close contact with them as you could if they were members of your own household.

We recognise how difficult this time has been, particularly on lonely and isolated people, and this change is designed to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the current social restrictions. Once you are in a support bubble, you can think of yourself as in a single household.